

## CHAPTER 12

### *Yûsuf*

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 12 *sections*; 111 *verses*)

This chapter receives its title from the story with which it deals. The entire chapter gives a continuous account of the history of Yûsuf, the first three verses and the concluding section both pointing to the purpose which underlies the story. It is not, in fact, a mere narrative, but foretells the ultimate triumph of the Holy Prophet, who was to be turned out of his native city, and also the final submission of those who were plotting against his very life.

The chapter deals with three kinds of vision, viz., the vision of a prophet (Yûsuf), which pointed to his ultimate triumph and the triumph of Truth (verses 4 and 100); the vision of a king, relating to the material welfare of those under his care (verses 43– 49), and the visions of ordinary men, relating to their own adversity or prosperity (verses 36 – 41). The grander the purpose, the longer the vision takes for its due fulfilment; Yûsuf's vision took a whole lifetime, the king's vision fourteen years, while the visions of ordinary men come to immediate fulfilment. The Holy Prophet doubtless obtained consolation from these facts, as he had before him a very grand object — the reformation, first of the Arabs and then of the whole world.

In the arrangement of the chapters, the connection of this chapter with the one preceding it is clear. That chapter deals with the histories of several well-known prophets and the fate of their opponents. This prophetically states that the mutual dealings of the Holy Prophet and his enemies would be similar to the dealings of Joseph and his brethren, there being persecution on one side and entire forgiveness and merciful dealing on the other.

The chapter belongs to the same period as the other chapters of this group.

### SECTION 1: Yûsuf's Vision

In the name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

**1 *Alif lâm râ*** - These are the verses of the Book that makes manifest.

- 2 Surely We have revealed it — an Arabic Qur’ân — that you may understand.
- 3 We narrate to you the best of narratives,<sup>a</sup> in that We have revealed to you this Qur’ân, though before this you was of those unaware.<sup>b</sup>
- 4 When Yûsuf said to his father: O my father, I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon — I saw them making obeisance to me.<sup>a</sup>
- 5 He said: O my son, relate not your dream to your brethren, lest they devise a plan against you. The *shaitân* indeed is an open enemy to man.
- 6 And thus will your *Rabb* choose you and teach you the interpretation of sayings, and make His favour complete to you and to the Children of Ya‘qûb, as He made it complete before to thy fathers, Ibrâhîm and Ishâq. Surely your *Rabb* is Knowing, Wise.

**3a.** It is called the best narrative because it is the best picture of the dealing of the Quraish with the Prophet, and the Prophet’s dealing with them. It was in the very words of Yûsuf to his brothers — *no reproof be against you this day* (verse 92) — that the Holy Prophet forgave the people of Makkah all the atrocities they had committed against him, atrocities which had but one end in view — the extirpation of Islâm and the destruction of the Prophet and his followers.

**3b.** The Prophet’s “unawareness” relates to his own future, of which this chapter gives a clear indication in the incidents of Joseph’s life, viz. that he was to be expelled from his home as Joseph was expelled, but that his countrymen would ultimately come to him in submission, asking pardon for their faults, as Yûsuf’s brothers had done. But “unawareness” here may also refer to all those things that are related in the Qur’ân, because the Prophet knew nothing of them before revelation. This is also stated in 42:52: “And thus did We reveal to you an inspired Book by Our command. You knew not what the Book was, nor what faith was, but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants”.

**4a.** Compare Genesis 37:9: “And, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me”.

## SECTION 2: Plot against Yûsuf by his Brothers

7 Verily in Yûsuf and his brethren there are signs for the inquirers.<sup>a</sup>

**8** When they said: Certainly Yûsuf and his brother<sup>a</sup> are dearer to our father than we, though we are a (strong) company. Surely our father is in manifest error —

**9** Slay Yûsuf or banish him to some (other) land, so that your father's regard may be exclusively for you, and after that you may be a righteous people.<sup>a</sup>

**10** A speaker among them said: Slay not Yûsuf, but, if you are going to do anything, cast him down to the bottom of the well. Some of the travellers may pick him up.<sup>a</sup>

**11** They said: O our father, why dost you not trust us with Yûsuf, and surely we are his sincere well-wishers?

**7a.** By inquirers are meant people who inquired about the Holy Prophet, who was at this time being persecuted most severely by the people of Makkah. They are told in plain words that the story of the Prophet and his opponents was the story of Yûsuf and his brothers.

**8a.** Benjamin, his brother by the same mother, is meant here.

**9a.** The conspiracy of the Quraish against the Holy Prophet is referred to in the Qur'ân in the following words: "And when those who disbelieved devised plans against you that they might confine you or slay you or drive you away" (8:30).

**10a.** "And Reuben said unto them: Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness and lay no hand upon him" (Genesis 37:22).

**12** Send him with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and play, and we shall surely guard him well.

**13** He said: Indeed it grieves me that you should take him away and I fear lest the wolf devour him, while you are heedless of him.

**14** They said: If the wolf should devour him, while we are a (strong) company, we should then certainly be losers.

**15** So when they took him away and agreed to put him down at the bottom of the pit, We revealed to him: You will certainly inform them of this affair of theirs while they perceive not.<sup>a</sup>

**16** And they came to their father at nightfall, weeping.

**17** They said: O our father, we went off racing one with another and left Yûsuf by our goods, so the wolf devoured him. And you will not believe us, though we are truthful.

**18** And they came with false blood on his shirt. He said: Nay, your *nafs* have made a matter light for you. So patience is goodly. And Allâh is He Whose help is sought against what you describe.<sup>a</sup>

**15a.** The essential difference between the two versions of this story, one given in the Bible and the other in the Qur'ân, is this, that while the Bible narrates it as a simple story, the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân preserves in it the devotional element, which alone can justify its record in a book meant for the devotional guidance of man. Here is a boy, whose age does not exceed seventeen years, who, though to all appearance lost forever, receives a Divine revelation and promise that he will one day be the master of his present oppressors. It is this circumstance in the life of a prophet, which really enables him to face all distresses and difficulties, viz., the deep conviction of the ultimate triumph of truth, which is produced by revelation from on high.

**18a.** The Qur'ân represents Ya'qûb as doubting from the very first the sincerity of Yûsuf's brothers, but not so the Bible. Again, according to the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân, Yûsuf relates his vision to his father, who is at once apprehensive of the envy of his brothers, if they are apprised of it; but according to the Bible, Jacob himself rebuked Joseph for his dream. Besides several discrepancies, the Bible narrative represents Jacob as an ordinary mortal, while the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân represents him as a prophet. The former makes him grieve for the loss of a beloved son as any other mortal would, but the latter shows that he had from the first hope: "And Allâh is He Whose help is sought against what you describe". And throughout the story this hope is the bright ray, without which the story would be a gloomy description, devoid of all value as a spiritual lesson. There are traces left still in the Bible narrative which show that the account as now met with in Genesis does not truly depict the character of Jacob, for in Genesis 37:11 we are told: "And his brethren envied him, but his father observed the saying", i.e. kept the vision in his heart, which shows that he was convinced of its truth. Thus the Qur'ân in fact, removes the inconsistencies of the Bible narrative.

**19** And there came travellers, and they sent their water-drawer and he let down his bucket. He said: O good news! This is a youth. And they concealed him as an article of merchandise, and Allâh was Cognizant of what they did.

**20** And they sold him for a small price, a few pieces of silver, and they showed no desire for him.<sup>a</sup>

### **SECTION 3: Yûsuf's Firmness under Temptation**

**21** And the Egyptian who bought him<sup>a</sup> said to his wife: Make his stay honourable. Maybe he will be useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son. And thus We established Yûsuf in the land, and that We might teach him the interpretation of sayings. And Allâh has full control over His affair, but most people know not.

**20a.** Compare Genesis 37:28: "Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelite for twenty pieces of silver". Those who sold him were either Joseph's brothers or the merchants who found him in the pit; according to the story as related in Genesis, Joseph's brothers sold him to the Midianites, who again sold him in Egypt.

**21a.** "And the Midianites sold him into Egypt unto Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's, and a captain of the guard" (Genesis 37:36).

**22** And when he attained his maturity, We gave him wisdom and knowledge. And thus do We reward the doers of good.<sup>a</sup>

**23** And she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him,<sup>a</sup> and made fast the doors and said: Come. He said: Allâh forbid! Surely my *Rabb* made good my abode. The wrongdoers never prosper.

**24** And certainly she desired him, and he would have desired her, were it not that he had seen the manifest evidence of his *Rabb*. Thus (it was) that We might turn away from him evil and indecency. Surely he was one of Our chosen servants.<sup>a</sup>

**25** And they raced with one another to the door, and she rent his shirt from behind, and they met her husband at the door. She said: What is the punishment for one who intends evil to your wife, except imprisonment or a painful chastisement?

**26** He said: She sought to seduce me. And a witness of her own family bore witness: If his shirt is rent in front, she speaks the truth and he is of the liars.

**27** And if his shirt is rent behind, she tells a lie and he is of the truthful.

**28** So when he saw his shirt rent behind, he said: Surely it is a device of you women. Your device is indeed great!<sup>a</sup>

**22a.** “And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man” (Genesis 39:2).

**23a.** *Râwada-hû* means *he endeavoured to turn him from a thing*.

**24a.** This does not show that Yûsuf had any desire for her; but that the temptation was so strong that, if he had not been strengthened by great faith in Allâh, he would have fallen a prey to mortal weakness.

**29** O Yûsuf, turn aside from this. And (O my wife), ask forgiveness for your sin. Surely you are one of the sinful.

#### SECTION 4: Yûsuf is Imprisoned

**30** And women in the city said: The chief's<sup>a</sup> wife seeks to seduce her slave. He has indeed affected her deeply<sup>b</sup> with (his) love. Truly we see her in manifest error.

**31** So when she heard of their device,<sup>a</sup> she sent for them and prepared for them a repast,<sup>b</sup> and gave each of them a knife, and said (to Yûsuf): Come out to them. So when they saw him, they deemed him great, and cut their hands (in amazement), and said: Holy Allâh! This is not a mortal!<sup>c</sup> This is but a noble *malak*.

**28a.** The vindication of Joseph's character on this occasion, and the production of the evidence of the shirt, are not related in the Bible; but without it the episode of leaving the garment becomes meaningless. It seems to be a clear omission. The next section proves that Yûsuf was not cast into prison for being guilty of having committed an outrage against his master's wife.

**30a.** *Al- 'Azîz* stands for Potiphar (*Kashshâf* (Commentary), by Abu-l-Qâsim Maḥmûd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharî). 'Azîz really means *mighty, powerful, strong*, and might as such be applied to such a dignitary as the captain of the guard, which rank was held by Potiphar. The king himself is spoken of as *malik* (king) in verse 43, and Joseph, who was only a dignitary, and not the king, is called *al- 'Azîz* (chief) in verse 78.

**30b.** *Shaghafa-hâ* literally means *he has affected her so that the love of him has entered beneath the shighâf*, i.e. *the pericardium of her heart* (Arabic-English Lexicon by Edward William Lane).

**31a.** The secret imputation of the women is called here their *makr* or *device*. Some think that she knew that certain women had circulated the news with the object of getting a chance to see Joseph, and hence it is called their *device*.

**31b.** *Muttaka 'a* means originally *a place in which one reclines*, then *that upon which one reclines in eating, drinking, or talking*, and also *food, or repast*, which last is considered to be the meaning here (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). The commentators add that *muttaka 'a* is the particular food which requires to be cut with a knife and suggest that to be the reason for handing over knives to them.

**32** She said: This is he about whom you blamed me. And certainly I sought to seduce him, but he was firm in continence. And if he do not what I bid him, he shall certainly be imprisoned, and he shall certainly be of the abject.

**33** He said: My *Rabb*, the prison is dearer to me than that to which they invite me. And if You turn not away their device from me, I shall yearn towards them and be of the ignorant.

**34** So his *Rabb* accepted his prayer and turned away their device from him. Surely He is the Hearer, the Knower.

**35** Then it occurred to them after they had seen the signs that they should imprison him till a time.<sup>a</sup>

## SECTION 5: Yûsuf's Preaching in the Prison

**36** And two youths entered the prison with him.<sup>a</sup> One of them said: I saw myself pressing wine. And the other said: I saw myself carrying bread on my head, of which birds were eating. Inform us of its interpretation; surely we see thee to be of the doers of good.<sup>b</sup>

**31c.** The Egyptians were a superstitious and polytheistic people, and anything strange, or any human being about whom they witnessed anything wonderful, was considered by them to be a deity. Hence, when they saw Joseph they thought he was not a mortal.

**35a.** There is nothing to show that Joseph was cast into prison on a charge of having committed an outrage on Potiphar's wife. As he was proved guiltless of that charge, it is very likely that some other accusation was brought against him; and more probably an autocratic ruler needed no excuse for putting an innocent man into prison.

By *signs* must be understood the *signs of Joseph's innocence*.

**36a.** Compare Gen. 40th chapter, which, however, omits Joseph's preaching. The two youths were the butler and the baker.

**37** He said: The food with which you are fed shall not come to you, but I shall inform you of its interpretation before it comes to you. This is of what my *Rabb* has taught me. Surely I have forsaken the way of life of a people, who believe not in Allâh, and are deniers of the Hereafter.

**38** And I follow the way of life as prescribed by Allâh of my fathers, Ibrâhîm and Ishâq and Ya'qûb. It beseems us not to associate aught with Allâh. This is by Allâh's grace upon us and on mankind, but most people give not thanks.

**39** O my two fellow-prisoners, are sundry lords better or Allâh the One, the Supreme?

**40** You serve not besides Him but names which you have named you and your fathers — Allâh has sent down no authority for them. Judgment is only Allâh's. He has commanded that you serve none but Him. This is the right way of life as prescribed by Allâh, but most people know not.

**41** O my two fellow-prisoners, as for one of you, he will serve wine for his lord to drink; and as for the other, he will be crucified, so that the birds will eat from his head. The matter is decreed concerning which you inquired.

**36b.** It should be noted that in the case of the four dreams mentioned in this chapter, viz. the two recorded here and Joseph's dream mentioned in verse 4 and Pharaoh's dream mentioned in verse 43, the word used for seeing a vision is the same word *arâ* (from *ru'yat*, meaning *to see*), as is used for the seeing of ordinary things.

**42** And he said to him whom he knew would be delivered of the two: Remember me with your *Rabb*. But the *shaitân* caused him to forget mentioning (it) to his lord, so he remained in the prison a few years.<sup>a</sup>

## SECTION 6: The King's Vision Interpreted by Yûsuf

**43** And the king said: I have seen seven fat kine which seven lean ones devoured; and seven green ears and (seven) others dry.<sup>a</sup> O chiefs, explain to me my dream, if you can interpret the dream.



- 44** They said: Confused dreams, and we know not the interpretation of dreams.
- 45** And of the two, he who had found deliverance and remembered after a long time said: I will inform you of its interpretation, so send me.
- 46** Yûsuf, O truthful one, explain to us seven fat kine which seven lean ones devoured, and seven green ears and (seven) others dry, that I may go back to the people so that they may know.
- 47** He said: You shall sow for seven years as usual, then that which you reap, leave it in its ear, except a little which you eat.
- 48** Then after that will come seven years of hardship, which will eat away all you have beforehand stored for them, except a little which you have preserved.
- 42a.** The word *bi`'-un* is applied to indicate a number from three (according to some, one) to ten (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).
- 43a.** Compare Genesis 41:1–31.
- 49** Then after that will come a year in which people will have rain and in which they will press (grapes).

## SECTION 7: Yûsuf Cleared of the Charges

- 50** And the king said: Bring him to me. So when the messenger came to him, he said: Go back to thy lord and ask him, what is the case of the women who cut their hands. Surely my *Rabb* knows their device.
- 51** (The king) said: What was your affair when you sought to seduce Yûsuf? They said: Holy Allâh! We knew of no evil on his part. The chief's wife said: Now has the truth become manifest. I sought to seduce him and he is surely of the truthful.
- 52** This is that he might know that I have not been unfaithful to him in secret, and that Allâh guides not the device of the unfaithful.<sup>a</sup>

## Part 13

- 53** And I call not myself sinless; surely (man's) self is wont to command evil, except those on whom my *Rabb* has mercy. Surely my *Rabb* is Forgiving, Merciful.<sup>a</sup>

**52a.** These are the words of Yûsuf, who explains his conduct in preferring to remain in prison until his innocence was established.

**53a.** These are also the words of Yûsuf. When a man addressed Jesus according to the man-made book called the Bible, as *good master*, he said: “Why callest thou me good?” (Mark 10:18) as he must have known what he is going to do about the wine. The righteous never attribute any good to themselves, but attribute all good to the Great Source of goodness — Allâh. Man’s self is here called *ammârah*, i.e. *one wont to command evil*. It is, in fact, the lowest stage in the religious growth of man. It is what may be called his animal self; low desires and animal passions rule the mind of man and he is capable of doing any evil without feeling any pangs at all. He submits to his carnal desires like the brute. The next stage is called the *lawwâmah*, which is referred to in 75:2 as the *self-accusing nafs*, when the slightest departure from the path of rectitude at once rouses the pangs of conscience. The third stage is the stage of perfection — the *mutma’innah*, or *the self at rest*, when it is in perfect peace, having attained the goal of perfection. See 89:30a which states: Those who have attained the second stage in the spiritual advancement and those who have attained the goal of perfection are spoken of as *those on whom my Rabb has mercy*.

**54** And the king said: Bring him to me, I will choose him for myself. So when he talked with him, he said: Surely thou art in our presence today dignified, trusted.

**55** He said: Place me (in authority) over the treasures of the land; surely I am a good keeper, knowing well.

**56** And thus did We give to Yûsuf power in the land — he had mastery in it wherever he liked. We bestow Our mercy on whom We please, and We waste not the reward of the doers of good.

**57** And certainly the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believe and guard against evil.

## SECTION 8: Yûsuf helps his Brothers

**58** And Yûsuf’s brethren came and went in to him, and he knew them, while they recognized him not.

**59** And when he furnished them with their provision, he said: Bring to me a brother of yours from your father. See you not that I give full measure and that I am the best of hosts?

**60** But if you bring him not to me, you shall have no measure (of corn) from me, nor shall you come near me.

**61** They said: We shall strive to make his father yield about him, and we are sure to do (it).

**62** And he said to his servants: Put their money<sup>a</sup> into their bags that they may recognize it when they go back to their family, so that they may come back.

**63** So when they returned to their father, they said: O our father, the measure is withheld from us, so send with us our brother that we may get the measure, and we will surely guard him.

**64** He said: Can I trust you with him, except as I trusted you with his brother before. So Allâh is the Best Keeper, and He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy.

**65** And when they opened their goods, they found their money returned to them. They said: O our father, what (more) can we desire? This is our property returned to us, and we shall bring corn for our family and guard our brother, and have in addition the measure of a camel-load. This is an easy measure.

**66** He said: I will by no means send him with you, until you give me a firm covenant in Allâh's name that you will bring him back to me, unless you are completely surrounded. And when they gave him their covenant, he said: Allâh is Guardian over what we say.

**62a.** *Bidâ'ah* means *merchandise*, or *a portion of one's property which one sends for traffic* (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane). *Money* is also called *Bidâ'ah*, because it is a man's stock with which he can traffic.

**67** And he said: O my sons, enter not by one gate but enter by different gates.<sup>a</sup> And I can avail you naught against Allâh. Judgment is only Allâh's. On Him I rely, and on Him let the reliant rely.

**68** And when they entered as their father had bidden them, it availed them naught against Allâh, but (it was only) a desire in the soul of Ya'qûb, which he satisfied. And surely he was possessed of knowledge, because We had given him knowledge, but most people know not.<sup>a</sup>

## SECTION 9: The Youngest Brother

**69** And when they went in to Yûsuf, he lodged his brother with himself, saying: I am your brother, so grieve not at what they do.

**70** Then when he furnished them with their provision, (someone) placed the drinking-cup in his brother's bag.<sup>a</sup> Then a crier cried out:<sup>b</sup> O caravan, you are surely thieves!

**67a.** Jacob, it seems, had come to know by Divine revelation that Joseph was there, and therefore he ordered them to enter by different gates so that Joseph might find his brother. The next verse makes it clear when it says: *And surely he was possessed of knowledge because We had given him knowledge.*

**68a.** The Bible narrative represents Jacob as being quite ignorant in the matter.

**70a.** Though the Bible narrative ascribes the placing of the cup to Joseph, the Qur'ân does not say so. It is evident that the furnishing of provisions was not done by Joseph himself. It was somebody else who carried out the orders and furnished the provisions; from the preceding section it is clear that Joseph's servants did so, and when he had to return the money, he had to give an order to that effect to his servants. On this occasion no such order was given. And therefore it was by the king's servants that the king's drinking-cup was placed in the bag of Joseph's brother. It is not stated here whether it was done intentionally or was put there by mistake; the words may imply either. Was it not one of Joseph's own brethren who did this act so that Benjamin might also be removed from Jacob? There is a clear hint to this possibility in verse 77, where Joseph accuses them of having done some guilty deed: "You are in an evil condition", and a still clearer hint in verse 89, where Joseph says: "Do you know how you treated Joseph and his brother, when you were ignorant?" Besides the episode of the cup, there is nothing in the Arabic Glorious Qur'ân to show that they were guilty of any mischief against Benjamin. I am therefore strongly of opinion that it was one of Joseph's own brethren who put the cup in Benjamin's bag, so as to get him involved in trouble, and remove him from the presence of Jacob, who loved him most after Joseph.

**71** They said, while they turned towards them: What is it that you miss?

**72** They said: We miss the king's drinking-cup, and he who brings it shall have a camel-load, and I am responsible for it.

**73** They said: By Allâh! You know for certain that we have not come to make mischief in the land, and we are not thieves.

**74** They said: But what is the penalty for this, if you are liars?

**75** They said: The penalty for this — the person in whose bag it is found, he himself is the penalty for it. Thus do we punish the wrongdoers.

**76** So he began with their sacks before the sack of his brother,<sup>a</sup> then he brought it out from his brother's sack. Thus did We plan for the sake of Yûsuf.<sup>b</sup> He could not take his brother under the king's law, unless Allâh pleased. We raise in degree whom We please. And above everyone possessed of knowledge is the All-Knowing One.

**70b.** It is a mistake to suppose that the crier was the very person who had placed the cup there. As verse 72 makes it clear, it was the king's drinking-cup; in other words it was not Joseph's personal property, but the property of the king, or government property. It is clear that the men who provided corn were different from those who had charge of the king's property.

**76a.** This was done out of respect for that brother, for they knew that Joseph had lodged him with himself.

**76b.** This makes it clear that this was not Joseph's plan, but a Divine plan. In other words, the circumstances were made to assist Joseph to keep his brother with him. Joseph's desire, no doubt, was to retain his brother Benjamin while the others returned; but he was unable to do so under the laws of Egypt, as is shown by what follows. This shows that one living under an alien government should abide by the laws of that government.

**77** They said: If he steal, a brother of his did indeed steal before.<sup>a</sup> But Yûsuf kept it secret in his *nafs*, and disclosed it not to them. He said: You are in an evil condition, and Allâh knows best what you state.

**78** They said: O chief, he has a father, a very old man, so take one of us in his place. Surely we see thee to be of the doers of good.

**79** He said: Allâh forbid that we should seize other than him with whom we found our property, for then surely we should be unjust!

## SECTION 10: Yûsuf Discloses his Identity

**80** So when they despaired of him, they conferred together privately. The eldest of them said: Know you not that your father took from you a covenant in Allâh's name, and how you fell short of your duty about Yûsuf before? So I shall not leave this land, until my father permits me or Allâh decides for me; and He is the Best of the judges.

**81** Go back to your father and say: O our father, your son committed theft. And we bear witness only to what we know, and we could not keep watch over the unseen.

**77a.** The brethren of Joseph made a false statement against Joseph to cast a veil over their own evil deeds. If Benjamin, they said, was a thief, so was his brother Joseph, as if they meant to say that this evil trait of character was due to the mother. There is probably a reference here to what is said in Genesis 31:19: "And Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's".

**82** And ask the town where we were, and the caravan with which we proceeded. And surely we are truthful.

**83** He said: Nay, your *nafs* have contrived an affair for you, so patience is good. Maybe Allâh will bring them together to me. Surely He is the Knowing, the Wise.

**84** And he turned away from them, and said: O my sorrow for Yûsuf! And his eyes were filled<sup>a</sup> (with tears) on account of the grief, then he repressed (grief).

**85** They said: By Allâh! You will not cease remembering Yûsuf till you are a prey to disease or you are of those who perish.<sup>a</sup>

**86** He said: I complain of my grief and sorrow only to Allâh, and I know from Allâh what you know not.<sup>a</sup>

**87** O my sons, go and inquire about Yûsuf and his brother, and despair not of Allâh's mercy.<sup>a</sup> Surely none

**84a.** *Ibyadda* and *bayyada* convey almost identical significance, and under the latter we find *bayyada al-siqâ'a*, meaning *amla'a-hû*, i.e. *he filled the vessel* (*Tâj al-'Arûs* (Dictionary), by *Imâm Muhibb al-Dîn Abu-l-Faîd Murtaḍâ*). *Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane also gives this significance of the words. '*Abd Allâh ibn 'Abbâs* (Companion), too, interprets the words as meaning *the filling of eyes with tears* (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by *Imâm Fakhr al-Dîn Râzî*). Even if we

accept the ordinary significance, *his eyes were whitened*, the meaning is that they were whitened with tears, which naturally came at the mention of Joseph.

**85a.** *Harad* is a person who is in a disordered and diseased state so that he is one from whom good is not expected. It also signifies one who falls down so that he is not able to rise again, or one affected by constant disease (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William Lane).

**86a.** This shows clearly that Ya‘qûb knew by Divine revelation that Yûsuf was alive.

**87a.** Here the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân again differs from the Bible and shows that Ya‘qûb was so certain of Yûsuf being alive because of the knowledge he received from Allâh, that he sent his sons a third time to Egypt to ascertain about Yûsuf. It appears that he had an inkling also that Yûsuf was in Egypt despairs of Allâh’s mercy except the disbelieving people.

**88** So when they came to him, they said: O chief, distress has afflicted us and our family, and we have brought scanty money, so give us full measure and be charitable to us. Surely Allâh rewards the charitable.

**89** He said: Do you know how you treated Yûsuf and his brother, when you were ignorant?

**90** They said: Are you indeed Yûsuf? He said: I am Yûsuf and this is my brother; Allâh has indeed been gracious to us. Surely he who keeps his duty and is patient — Allâh never wastes the reward of the doers of good.

**91** They said: By Allâh! Allâh has indeed chosen thee over us, and we were certainly sinners.

**92** He said: No reproof be against you this day.<sup>a</sup> Allâh may forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy.

**93** Take this my shirt and cast it before my father’s face — he will come to know.<sup>a</sup> And come to me with all your family.

**92a.** It is related that the Prophet took hold of the two sides of the gate of the Ka‘bah on the day of the conquest of Makkah and said to the Quraish: How do you think I should treat you? They said: We hope for good, a noble brother and the son of a noble brother. Then he said: I say as my brother Yûsuf said: “No reproof be against you this day” (*Al-Tafsîr al-Kabîr* (Commentary), by Imâm Fakḥr al-Dîn Râzî).

**93a.** *Baṣîr* means one who sees things with the eyes, as well as one endowed with mental perception or one knowing (*Arabic-English Lexicon* by Edward William

Lane). The Qur'ân does not say anywhere that Ya'qûb had become blind. The shirt was sent as being a reminder of the torn shirt of Yûsuf, which Yûsuf's brethren had brought to Ya'qûb (verse 18).

## SECTION 11: Isrâ'îl goes to Egypt

**94** And when the caravan left (Egypt), their father said: Surely I scent (the power of) Yûsuf, if you call me not a dotard.<sup>a</sup>

**95** They said: By Allâh! You are surely in your old error.

**96** Then when the bearer of good news came, he cast it before his face so he became certain. He said: Did I not say to you that I know from Allâh what you know not?

**97** They said: O our father, ask forgiveness of our sins for us, surely we are sinners.

**98** He said: I shall ask forgiveness for you of my *Rabb*. Surely He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

**99** Then when they went in to Yûsuf, he lodged his parents<sup>a</sup> with himself and said: Enter Egypt in safety, if Allâh please.

**100** And he raised his parents on the throne,<sup>a</sup> and they fell prostrate for his sake.<sup>b</sup> And he said: O my father, this is the significance of my vision of old — my *Rabb* has made it true. And He was indeed kind to me, when He brought me forth from the prison, and brought you from the desert after the *shaitân* had sown dissensions between me and my brethren. Surely my *Rabb* is Benignant to whom He pleases. Truly He is the Knowing, the Wise.

**94a.** When the caravan in which were Yûsuf's brethren departed from Egypt, Ya'qûb again received assurance from on high about Yûsuf, so he said to those about him that he scented the power of Yûsuf. Ya'qûb knew that Yûsuf was alive and of this he informed his sons again and again, but he now told them further that he had received an assurance from Allâh that Yûsuf occupied a high position.

**99a.** Leah was Rachel's elder sister and a wife of Jacob (Gen. 29:16–28). The fact that Rachel was dead in no way contradicts this statement, because Leah would be Joseph's mother in both capacities, as his mother's sister and as his father's wife.

**100a.** The royal throne is not meant here, for Yûsuf himself did not sit on the royal throne. Yûsuf raised his parents to his own raised seat; or the meaning may be that he placed them in a good position. Compare Genesis 47:11: "And Joseph placed his



father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land”.

**100b.** Seeing the highly dignified position to which Yûsuf had been raised in Egypt, they all fell prostrate before Allâh as a mark of thanksgiving. Yûsuf speaks of this, i.e. of the dignity to which he was raised, as the fulfilment of his vision. This is made clear in the verse that follows.

**101** My *Rabb*, You have given me of the kingdom and taught me of the interpretation of sayings. Originator of the *samâwât* and the earth, You are my Friend in this world and the Hereafter. Make me die in submission and join me with the righteous.

**102** This is of the announcements relating to the unseen (which) We reveal to you, and you was not with them when they resolved upon their affair, and they were devising plans.<sup>a</sup>

**102a.** Rodwell’s remark that “Muhammad must at this period, while recasting and working up these materials, have entered upon a course of wilful dissimulation and deceit (although the end would justify to him the means employed) in claiming inspiration for them” is due to crass ignorance, if not to deep malice. It has already been noted how the Qur’ân, after relating that which befell the opponents of a prophet, immediately changes the subject, hinting that the same punishment was in store for the opponents of the Prophet, *and throughout the Arabic Glorious Qur’ân the anbâ’ al-ghaib, or the announcements relating to the unseen, signify not the ancient histories of past prophets, but a repetition of those histories in the life of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad*. Take this case, for instance. The history of Yûsuf ends in the last verse with his prayer for being classed with the righteous at his death, and there is a reference in this verse to the similar events that must befall the Holy Prophet. It has already been shown how the events in the lives of the two prophets closely resemble each other. The reference in “when they resolved upon their affair and they were devising plans” is to the resolution of the Quraish and their plans of either *killing the Prophet* or *banishing him* or *imprisoning him*; see 8:30. The two verses which follow and the whole of the next section show still more clearly that a change has been introduced with this verse. The Qur’ân does not relate stories for the sake of giving information of the past, but for the lessons which they afford for the future guidance of man. Compare 3:44a, 11:49a, and 12:3b.

**103** And most men believe not, though you desire it eagerly.

**104** And you ask them no reward for it. It is nothing but a reminder for all mankind.

## **SECTION 12: A Lesson for the Prophet's Opponents**

**105** And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth do they pass by! yet they turn away from it.

**106** And most of them believe not in Allâh without associating others (with Him).

**107** Do they then feel secure from the coming to them of an all-encompassing chastisement from Allâh or from the coming to them of the hour suddenly, while they perceive not?

**108** Say: This is my way: I call to Allâh, with certain knowledge — I and those who follow me. And glory be to Allâh! And I am not of the polytheists.

**109** And We sent not before thee any but men, from the people of the towns, to whom We sent revelation. Have they not then travelled in the land and seen what was the end of those before them? And certainly the abode of the Hereafter is best for those who keep their duty. Do you not then understand?

**110** Until, when the messengers despaired and (the people) thought that they were told a lie, Our help came to them, and whom We pleased was delivered. And Our punishment is not averted from the guilty people.<sup>a</sup>

**111** In their histories there is certainly a lesson for men of understanding. It is not a narrative which could be forged, but a verification of what is before it, and a distinct explanation of all things, and a guide and a mercy to a people who believe.

**110a.** The personal pronouns, if not rightly understood, quite distort the sense of the passage. The messengers warn their people, but the latter are so stubborn that the messengers at length despair of their people benefiting by the warning. The people, on the other hand, deem, on account of the delay of the punishment, that what the prophets had spoken to them about the coming of the punishment was a lie. Then it is that the promised help for the prophets comes and the punishment with which the evildoers are threatened overtakes them. That the prophets never despair of Divine assistance coming to them, in accordance with Divine promise, is clear from what has

already been said in verse 87: “Surely none despairs of Allâh’s mercy except the disbelieving people.”